Interview with Betsy Lane

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Program
Foreign Service Spouse Series

BETSY LANE

Interviewed By: Joan Bartlett

Initial Interview Date: June 8th, 1990

Q: This is an interview with Betsy Lane. I'm at her house in Westminster, Massachusetts, and it is June 8th, 1990.

Betsy, could we start off with your telling us a little bit about where you came from, and where you grew up?

LANE: Actually, I grew up overseas, which maybe makes it easier to be a Foreign Service wife, I'm not sure. I was born in Syria. My parents were missionaries, and they moved from Syria to Lebanon when I was about six years old. We were on home leave for a whole year, and then we went back to Lebanon at that point. I went to school in Beirut, as a boarder. The American Community School was a boarding school in those days and they took boarders from the age of eight. Anyway, I was in boarding school from third grade on, and stayed there all through World War II. It was a wonderful place to grow up; Beirut was marvelous in those days. I think it was nice in the fifties before they started that awful building spree which to me has ruined Beirut. And now, of course, it's all rubble.

We ended up having a lot to do with Lebanon. I grew up there and then came back here to go to college. After I was married, we went back to the Middle East.

Q: Right back to Beirut?

LANE: When George came into the Foreign Service they were urging people to become area specialists. He decided that Arabic was a fairly good language because you weren't limited to one post particularly, and we both had French already. We figured with Arabic and French we could do fairly well in the Arab world. His first assignment was on the OECD desk in Washington in the State Department. The Office of Economic Development, it doesn't exist anymore. He decided then to leave that and go for Arabic language training, for two years. He started at FSI in Arlington, and then we went to Beirut where the language school was part of the Embassy.

Actually, before that, I should say, we were married in Beirut as well, and two of our children were born in Beirut.

Q: How did you meet?

LANE: We met right here. Right on this porch as a matter of fact.

Q: This is his family's house?

LANE: It's his family's house, and I had a summer job as an au pair, with cousins who lived down the hill who were also missionaries in Beirut, and relatives of my husband's family, and also very good friends of my family. I've known them all my life, and their youngest child could only speak Arabic. Since I was fluent in Arabic they suddenly thought if they could get me to come and spend the summer with them, they would be better off. So I did, and George was in the Army at that point and came home on furlough. We actually met right here on this porch—very funny, given our different backgrounds. We met right here, and now to be living here is sort of strange.

Q: And then, to go back to Lebanon, you were saying you went back to finish up your Arabic. You spoke Arabic?

LANE: I spoke it. I'm fluent, but illiterate! I don't read and write, but I can speak and get along in the souk and so forth. I just never went back to school to learn how to read. I thought of doing it several times, but I think I just didn't have the gumption because I could speak so easily and that's what I needed. Yes, we ended up then at FSI for two years. Arabic language training was a two-year program in those days. Our first assignment after that was Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. We had four kids by then—no, we had three kids by then. Our first two were born in this country, one here in this area, and another in Washington. Our first daughter was born the day my husband was accepted in the Foreign Service. He had taken the exam, and this was the period of “Wristonization.” Funds were yet again limited, so we had to wait a long time for an assignment. We had just about given up and decided that he had to go and get a job because this child was due any minute.

I remember we were at the hospital and he had actually gotten a job with Raytheon that day, our child was born and the appointment came through. So it all sort of came together in one spot in 1957, I think it was. He never worked for anyone except the Foreign Service after we were married.

Q: What was it like to go back to Lebanon?

LANE: Well, of course, I felt very comfortable there. It was nice to go back, and my parents were still there. We had many friends, and having grown up there, I knew a lot of the university people because all their kids went to school with us. For example, Malcolm Kerr, who was the president of the American University, and was shot and killed. He was not a classmate, but he was in school when I was, and we were very good friends. He and his wife were there while we were at FSI. It was wonderful in that we had access to all sorts of different worlds in Beirut. It wasn't just the Embassy crowd because you know often the Embassy crowd is a little bit removed from the local scene. It's inevitable and you can't avoid too much of that. And, of course, I knew my parent's missionary friends, plus many Lebanese contacts. George had to do a two-week stay with an Arab family, and we

arranged that through my parent's contacts, which was probably a little easier than doing it on your own.

Q: This was with his language training?

LANE: With the language training—they had to do two weeks actually living with a family where they could speak only Arabic.

Q: So you didn't go along on that.

LANE: No. We weren't supposed to. We stayed in Beirut for two years, and then went to Jeddah. Our son was about six weeks old when we went down to Jeddah, and then our fourth child was born while we were in Jeddah.

Q: Did you find Jeddah very difficult, as a woman?

LANE: I think in some ways it was easier then than it is now. And that's a funny thing to say because the fundamentalist movement has taken over today and has made it much harder, and it's a much bigger place. When we were there there were fewer foreigners, and you expected it to be difficult. We knew what we were getting into. My problem...I did find Jeddah a difficult post, but all my problems were with the Embassy. It's hard to say, but life was just very, very difficult and nobody tried to help make things a little bit easier. For example, the commissary there had dog and cat food but they wouldn't stock baby food because they said everybody wanted a different brand, so they wouldn't get any one brand. Which to me was insane, so we all made our own baby food which was probably much healthier as it turns out. Of course, women are not allowed to drive, and that makes it extremely difficult to do your basic shopping. You had to wait and grab your husband after a long day at the office, and just at that “witching hour” when your kids all need to be fed and put to bed, you had to go out and drive into town to one or two grocery stores, and buy your potatoes and onions, and things like that.

Q: You mean your husband had to drive?

LANE: Your husband had to drive you, right. You couldn't drive yourself. We had a very nice DCM's wife, Beanie Thacher, who was super about this and whenever she could, would take some of us along with her because she had a driver. We tried to suggest that the Embassy use a carry-all, that we would pay for, but for various reasons, it couldn't be done. We were willing to pay for whatever it cost because we knew it was against regulations to do this kind of thing. There's no reason things like that can't be done. When I went to Beirut to have my fourth child— went to the hospital there—and discovered the Embassy had a bus going out to the beach three times a day that people paid for. I mean, if that could be done in Beirut, there's no reason you couldn't get a carry-all to take women shopping to get their basic necessities once a week.

Q: How many were you there? I mean wives.

LANE: Living on the compound, maybe 15, something like that—12, 15. There were a few people who lived off the compound, but not very many. Most of us were in these little pre-fab houses. And then there were many single people, such as secretaries, of course. It was even harder for them because they had to depend on the kindness of their friends, or somebody who would be willing to drive them to stores. They were taking people out of there in straight jackets for a while—figuratively speaking. But I think a little bit of money spent on some preventive medicine would have gone a long way to making the post work a little bit better. That's the kind of argument I've had with the Foreign Service really since we've joined it. I think they were not always as supportive as they could have been, and should have been. We now have the Family Liaison Office and all of that, that I think is wonderful. But there were many, many years when there really was nothing, and in certain posts you really do need a little extra help. It costs the Department money when people get sick, and have nervous breakdowns. I just don't understand that mentality I'm afraid.

Q: I think the Family Liaison Office has helped a lot.

LANE: There's no question, because you at least have some place to go and try to work out solutions for some of these problems. The whole atmosphere is different. I mean women aren't going to put up with that sort of thing anymore.

Q: You were in Jeddah two years?

LANE: Two years.

Q: That is a long time without getting to the store.

LANE: It's a funny kind of place. But aside from that we still look back on it as a wonderful post. We had good friends, and we had a lot of fun. We had a good little singing group going, and we put on Christmas programs—the things you do to stay sane.

Q: Was this with people from other embassies. Were you very involved with the other embassies?

LANE: Yes. You do become...at a post like that you become involved with other embassies because you don't have much contact with the local Saudies. It's very hard to have meaningful contact. The USIS Director wanted me to teach English to some of the princesses of the royal family. For a while I thought this might be fun, and I nearly broke my neck to try to get the kids all taken care of so I could go and teach. They had completely forgotten about the appointment, and gone off to the beach for the day. So I decided I really couldn't handle that, since it was so difficult for me to make the arrangements. It was just a lark for them. I think they decided, “Wouldn't it be fun to learn English.” They're not used to having to cater to anybody else's schedule.

Q: Were your children in school there?

LANE: Two of them were. There was a small American school there which is now quite big. I guess one of them must have been in second grade. The two oldest were in school, one was a baby, and then our son was just 2 or 3 years old.

Q: And you had help in the house.

LANE: Yes. We all had house boys, Sudani house boys who were good solid people, but not the greatest help. I mean they were fine for washing dishes and scrubbing the floor. You could get help for entertaining. We borrowed each other's house boys. We did things fairly simply, but we did a lot of entertaining.

Q: But the children weren't in the care of somebody?

LANE: No, there wasn't anybody. You do all of that yourself. It was a hard time with the kids too, and they were sick a lot. We went through measles, and chicken pox, and all that sort of thing. Medical facilities were almost non existent. There were a couple of local hospitals with German doctors. Just before we left we got an Embassy nurse, the first one to arrive at the post, and that was wonderful. It made all the difference in the world just to have somebody that could give the kids their shots, for example, and to keep you up on the simple basic things because with most children's diseases you just need a little TLC, or a little reassurance to get through it. So that was again another kind of difficult thing about Jeddah. Today it's certainly much easier.

Q: But you said in some ways it would be harder these days.

LANE: Because the problems are still there. You still can't drive, and maybe it's even more difficult because everything is so much more modern. There's a modern veneer on everything, and you don't think that you should have to put up with this sort of thing. For a while there they were throwing women, in jail, those who were caught driving a car. There was a German woman dentist who had to drive to get around. She'd be thrown in jail and then she'd call her contact in the royal family and they'd get her out. It was sort of a regular

thing. I guess it was part of the fun of being there. She didn't really mind it. But for most of us that would have been awkward. We just didn't drive. And if you just stop and think what that does to your life—the Embassy in those days was five miles out of town so you couldn't exactly walk anywhere.

Q: Could you walk off the compound?

LANE: Not really, no, not comfortably, certainly not by yourself. It was a big compound. There were two tennis courts. There wasn't a pool. They dug a hole in the ground because there were funds to build a pool, but the hole sat there for two years. It was really insulting to walk by that and wish we could be swimming. There was a little tiny pool for the kids. The water had to be changed about every two days, but that was better than nothing. At least the kids could get wet.

Q: After Jeddah where did you go?

LANE: We went to Aleppo for two years. We were going to go to Casablanca, but that was switched. I mean while we were on home leave our assignment was changed.

Q: Where were you born? In Damascus?

LANE: I was born in Aleppo actually. It was odd to go back. Aleppo is a wonderful city, and that was a nice post. Again, very small. There was just the Consul General, the Economic Officer, my husband and the Consular Officer, and several local employees, all very good. There is a large Armenian group there. Many of our employees were Armenians just because they happened to know English a little better, and they tended to be slightly better educated. When we first got there we spent three weeks in a hotel—in the old Baron Hotel that you read about. It seems some reporter makes a journey there almost once a year and then writes it up in the New York Times. Just recently I saw another article. I don't think they've bought new sheets since Lawrence of Arabia was there—old linen sheets. It lives on its charm, long since dissipated. We spent three weeks there with all four kids

in one room, it was awful, just horrible. The Consulate had a nice yard, but we weren't supposed to go up and use that. Again, I expect the local post to be difficult sometimes, but I don't expect your own people to make life difficult for you. This I find very strange. And again, if I hadn't had those contacts...

Q: You must have been out of your mind in a hotel room with four children.

LANE: Absolutely. I nearly was. This had been after a very difficult home leave. I guess I was very close to a nervous breakdown, but I didn't know it at the time. You do afterwards when you suddenly let go.

Q: A terribly hard thing to do. Keeping everybody happy.

LANE: It was awful. Our youngest was 18 months at the time. Even during home leave she'd stopped eating everything except taking her bottle which she would still do. When we got to Aleppo she wouldn't even take that, so she wasn't eating anything. I began to understand about battered children because you come very close when your child is crying and won't stop, and then won't eat, and you have no place to go, and there's nobody to help you, and you're stuck in a hotel, and you've got three other kids to take care of, and, of course, your husband is at the office all day. It wasn't much fun but as soon as we got into our house, it was fine. We had a nice house to live in, and it was a nice post, and we thoroughly enjoyed it. That part of Syria is beautiful country, with lots of nice archaeological things to see. Life was basically very pleasant.

Q: Did you ask to go there? I mean, how did it happen to work out? Or did they know that you...

LANE: I don't think they had a clue about my background in that part of the world. I would just as soon have gone somewhere else and seen another part of the world. It was, of course, very comfortable, but I suppose one problem with having grown up out there is that you are perhaps too sensitive to the local problems. I mean being an American

diplomat in the Arab world hasn't been much fun in the last few years. I think perhaps I'm too sensitive to the way the local people feel because I've grown up there. When our Consul kept urging us to go out and make contacts with some people, I felt there were times when you don't push your contacts. People know you're there, and if they want to see you, they'll come and see you. But if they did come to see you, chances are they were roughed up by the intelligence people, and possibly thrown in jail. It was a difficult time. This was after they'd nationalized all the economy and there were always problems with the ongoing Arab-Israel problem. You feel it very strongly because you're there on the spot. I think there are times when you don't push your presence on people. I'm probably too sensitive to that kind of thing, so someone else might have done a better job even though I'm more comfortable in the language and all of those things. I don't know. It's a debatable question. I found it harder and harder to live as an American in the Arab world. Over and over you'd see things going the wrong way, or not acting in our own best interests that's what is hard to see. And, of course, you're always accused of being too sympathetic to the side you're living with, and inevitably you tend to be. But I really like to think you get to the point where you're fed up with both sides, that you'd like to see a slightly more balanced approach from our government, and what we've been doing is not in our own interests. Or even in Israel's interest. I think that's what I find should be the good point to make because our total blind support of anything Israel has wanted to do, has not been in Israel's best interest. When you're living there, you have to live with that all the time and maybe it tears you up a little more, I'm not sure.

Q: It's a very touchy issue.

LANE: It's a very difficult issue. It's a very emotional issue. You just can't get away from emotion on all sides. I think that's probably one reason it's so difficult to break down the barriers, and the fear, and the distrust, and the hatred that's built up for so many years. I've watched it all my life and that's why...

Q: And you continue to watch it.

LANE: Yes. Exactly.

Q: Do you keep on top of things now?

LANE: Oh, sure. We tend to be news junkies. I think it's probably just part of the way we are. You wouldn't go into the Foreign Service if you weren't interested in the political scene.

Q: So after Aleppo you went to Washington.

LANE: No, we went to Rabat which was a lovely post. That was maybe one of our nicest posts. The kids enjoyed it too, we had a pleasant place to live, there was a good school for the kids and they were finally all going to school, and it's just a nice place to live. The French left a nice infrastructure behind, and all sorts of nice restaurants, good wines that made life very pleasant. It was just a nice place to live, and I must say I was very reluctant to leave. We had hoped to have our first three year tour there and instead got shipped off to Benghazi after two years in Rabat. That was a whole other scene. We were there a year before Qadhafi and during the revolution, and then the year after the revolution. That was, again, another so-called “challenging post.” The year before the revolution it was just like anything else. It was okay. We were in a nice house, and the school was good. There was another little international school. Many of those are very good little schools. You don't realize at the time how good they are. You worry about your kids missing things like band, and all the extra curricular stuff that the average American kids get, but they get so many other things. We had interesting teachers, multi-national teachers, and small classes. They really did very well in those places, and we were very lucky that even though we had fairly difficult posts, at least we had fairly good schools.

Q: These were international, in that people from other embassies...

LANE: Right. And even some local people, Libyan students were there, but all the instruction was in English.

Q: So you say you arrived there...things were quite calm.

LANE: Yes, King Idris was still in charge, but of course he was in absentia most of the time. We had gone on our first leave over to Malta for a few days, and got back the day before the revolution which was very fortunate. I mean, if we'd been stuck in Malta it would have been worse.

Q: You wouldn't have gotten back in.

LANE: No, we probably wouldn't have. It was very fortunate we were there. That was a tricky time. It was a bloodless revolution. People forget that. You think of Qadhafi as this horrendous sort of terrorist type, but he was a young lieutenant then, about 30 years old. At first we didn't know what was going on. We didn't even know who was in charge for a long time, and our residence was way out of town. They set up all sorts of little check points all along the major highways manned by 15-16 year old kids with Kalashnikov rifles—this is the Russian machine gun. They were nervous kids. George went in to the embassy about 7:00 in the morning. There were at least ten of these checkpoints between our house and the Embassy. And then he'd come home about 10:00 at night. The soldiers are nervous on the checkpoints, and everyone was, and you just had to play it very cool. We weren't allowed to go out. We were more or less under curfew, so I stayed home with the kids—we did puzzles and that kind of thing.

Q: Did they not go to school?

LANE: They closed the school during this period because they couldn't be sure what was going on. So we did puzzles, made cookies and did all sorts of things that we could think of doing. The electricity was always going off there too. It would go off for three or four days at a time, and the water would go off. I remember doing puzzles by candlelight. I took

up embroidery at that point—I had never done it before, or since. After getting the kids to bed at night, and waiting for George to come home, I couldn't get my mind calm enough to read sometimes. I found that embroidery kept me busy and it was very therapeutic.

Q: Were you very nervous every night wondering...

LANE: I suppose I was. You don't really know what was...it was the uncertainly of it really. It's not that you think he was going to be kidnaped, or taken away or anything, but rather that some kid would get nervous and shoot him by mistake—that's what you're always worried about. One or two of the other consuls had very close incidents. The Italian consul insisted on his diplomatic immunity too strongly, but these kids don't know anything about that. You've got to respect that, and treat them that way, with respect, and great delicacy. I guess he didn't come to any harm, but it was a close call. It was that kind of thing that we...and then for the rest of the year things settled down.

Q: How long did that go on?

LANE: About a week, a week or ten days when things were kind of uncertain. Nobody knew quite what was happening. I remember at that time too, for the first time we were sending new planes to Israel and the BBC—we always listened to BBC broadcasts, they were the only ones we could hear—and it was a question of who was recognizing the new government. We didn't know who was in charge and what was going on.

The BBC finally announced one day that the British government had recognized the new government in Libya, and in the same sentence they said the Americans had just delivered the first F-4s or F-5s to Israel. I thought that was rather unkind of our British cousins to put that all in one sentence. But that's the kind of thing when you're sort of a sitting duck. You don't know what can go on. It was touchy too because in the previous government, I think our CIA people had been acknowledged. The government knew who they were, so when

the new people took over all those people were known, and it was a very tricky situation for some of them.

Q: Did they leave then?

LANE: Very quickly, yes. Most of them were named PNG. I remember one young couple—he couldn't come home and for a while they just kept him in the Embassy because they didn't quite know what was going to happen. In fact some of our communicators slept in the Embassy. You don't know whether the mob is suddenly going to turn around and attack you. That's what you are really worried about, and that had happened. They had had a mob scene, and we had a couple of mobs come down to the Embassy too, but fortunately they were able to suggest that maybe their spokesman come in, and they would talk to him. I think they just wanted some recognition. That part of it wasn't fun.

Q: No, because as you say, you never know.

LANE: And the whole mob scene—the mob dynamics is so unpredictable. All it takes is one little spark.

Q: How did things go after the coup, and how did you spend your days?

LANE: We had about a year more. I was so busy all the time, and it's so hard to remember. I never had time on my hands. A lot of it was spent doing your basic food shopping. We did a lot of entertaining, and when the Ambassador came over from Tripoli he stayed in our house. We had two bedrooms set aside for them all the time and they came fairly often. There was a lot of entertaining that you had to do regularly, and visitors, and four kids. We had two house boys—one came in the morning, and the other in the afternoon. They did the basic essentials such as simple cooking, cleaning and that sort of thing. We went on trips around places. Of course, nobody has been there so you don't have the Coca Cola stands, and bus loads of tourists. Almost everywhere you go there you can dig up an artifact.

Q: Would you go with a guide?

LANE: No, we'd just go on our own. Just go out and take a picnic lunch. We did some camping on the beaches, and there was always a British group doing theater productions—we put on Trial by Jury, and a couple of other musicals. There was a large British community because they had many teachers at the university teaching English, and engineers building bridges. We had, of course, the oil company people, so there was a fairly large American contingent, but many of them were out in the field, the headquarter people in Benghazi and we were kind of a small post as opposed to Tripoli where there were more foreigners. But the British community was really large. And again, it was hard to have really meaningful contact with the Libyan community, but I think part of it was I was so busy with the kids at this stage of my life—you don't have the energy to go out and have lunch. And it's so hard to get a response, unless you want to spend all your days going to tea parties. And I could have with the language, of course, But I wasn't really interested and I didn't have the energy.

Q: Well, I think there are times for everything. When your children are that age until they're...

LANE: You really need to be with them at that stage. And again, there was nothing there. I mean there was no library, no support system at all. The school did a lot, they put on plays, and we had sports—we tried to get little softball games going. There were even some Peace Corps volunteers when we got there, but they left after the revolution because Qadhafi was afraid they were all spies. And there were some young graduate students, too. There was a young couple we got to know from this area—the next town over from here. The husband teaches at Clark and we got to know them. They were our baby sitters most of the time, which was just marvelous because our kids were old enough that they really didn't need a baby sitter, but you were also reluctant to leave them alone. We had guards out in front of the house and people would say, “Why do you worry if you

have guards?" I said, "That's exactly why I worry," because you can't trust those guards—two young daughters growing up—you really can't go off and leave the house like that.

Q: What were the ages?

LANE: My oldest was, I guess, sixth-seventh grade, she was about thirteen, and down to first grade school. It worked out wonderfully, this young couple came and baby sat for us, and they used our washing machine and dryer which was wonderful for them, and they could enjoy the record player, and things like that that we had.

Q: And nice for the children to get to know that age group.

LANE: Exactly. It was a very nice reciprocal arrangement. That really saved my life because you couldn't find baby sitters in a place like that, it was very hard to have to leave your kids to go out in the evening. And you're always a little uneasy, you never know quite what's going to happen.

Q: So where was it after...

LANE: After Libya we came back home, that was almost eleven years overseas.

Q: Back to Washington?

LANE: Back to Washington.

Q: That must have been a hardship.

LANE: It was. It was very hard as a matter of fact. And it was hardest on our oldest daughter. She was thirteen when she came back, and there wasn't any Family Liaison Office go to. She was a very unhappy young teenager. She had gone from that lovely little intimate school in Benghazi to a junior high in Fairfax County with 2000 kids, and she was just swamped. It was awful. She was ill most of that year just from the tension. I knew

what was wrong with her, but I didn't really know what to do about it. We kept having her checked, we thought maybe there was something physically wrong. Of course, it can be just as serious whether it's—in fact, more so if the basis is emotional. Again, you learn by doing. I would do it differently today but you have to learn on your kids, unfortunately, and the older one probably has a harder time of it. It took her a long time to get over that, to really feel good about the States. For a long, long time she was unhappy here. The others were young enough that they readjusted fairly easily. We found a nice place to live, it was interesting, and George's job was — he had two assignments. Again, we had been moving so much. We didn't think we were going to be there longer than two years, but of course, we ended up staying four. It's always good to be back, but it is hard. I think sometimes going back to suburbia which I have decided is a terrible place to live—I was in the car all the time—basketball practice, or band practice, or piano lessons, or ballet lessons, or whatever it is. I literally was in the car most of the time, I spent my time behind the wheel those whole four years. It was just when the kids were finishing up elementary school and junior high.

Q: So your oldest must have been...

LANE: She finished high school in three years. We knew we were going to Swaziland a year before we left. That's the first time ever we've had that much notice. Usually it's last minute and two or three assignments before you finally settle on one, and off you go. So this was very unusual. The fact that we knew where we were going. She didn't quite want to go on college at that point because she'd been so miserable all through high school. So she finished up in three years, not really working at all, not getting a decent education, but she got good marks. I didn't quite know how. She went with us. We went to Swaziland which, again, was a lovely little post. It's a beautiful country, and there was an excellent school there—the Waterford School, run by people from South Africa who were fed up with the apartheid system. It was started by a British vicar with about six young boys, and its now multiracial, and it's now coed. It was the only one like it in South Africa, as you can imagine. A very politically conscious school. Mandela's two daughters were there when our

kids were there. I understand his grandchildren are there now. And Dean Tutu's kids were there. I gave piano lessons to one of his daughters. It was a very interesting school and the kids did enjoy that. They were one of few whites there.

The school didn't like taking Americans because at that time they were on the A-level system, the Cambridge A-level. And they figured Americans were not prepared for that. It's quite true, they are not. Our oldest daughter went back to school there. She decided to go for an A-level degree, so she did it in about a year and a half, everyone telling her it just couldn't be done, impossible. And she did it, and did reasonably well, and then went from there to a university in England because she figured nobody in the States knew what A-levels were about.

Q: Was she happy in England? Where did she go?

LANE: She went to Nottingham. You know the British system where they offer you a place, the places that have a place, get to where you are and what you did in your A-levels. She was okay. I would say she sort of got through it. She got a good degree, and did all right, but I don't think it was an easy time for her.

Q: She was probably happier than you think she was.

LANE: Maybe. But you do worry when they are so far away. That's probably the hardest thing about the Foreign Service really, is how your kids cope. On the whole, ours have done very well but not without problems at all. You don't escape problems, if you do I think it is because you haven't been paying attention, they're there.

But Swaziland was just a lovely place. I would go there again anytime.

Q: So your other children went through the British system?

LANE: They did go there, and then our oldest decided she didn't want...our second one—our oldest was in university by then, she was just starting at university then—and the

second one decided she didn't want to do O-level so she came back and went to Northfield Mt. Hermon School, which is a very good prep school here, which gives a scholarship to Foreign Service kids to help on your educational allowance so that you can afford to bring your kids home once a year, which you couldn't otherwise. And it's a good school too because there are other Foreign Service kids there, and also the foreign kids, unlike many other prep schools where you are kind of a fish out of water. Anyway, she was there, and then our son, who is the third one, had already been accepted there, when all of a sudden George was assigned to Beirut within 24 hours. He got a flash telegram—the only flash telegram he'd ever gotten. And he left Swaziland literally within 24 hours to go back to Washington. This was when Beirut was...just after Ambassador Meloy had been killed, and they didn't know whether they were going to close the Embassy, or leave it open, and Kissinger was trying to make up his mind. I guess they pulled George and one other fellow back to see who was going to go, and George spent two weeks in Washington waiting for them to make up their minds. And they finally decided over a weekend that they were going to try to keep the Embassy open, and I think, simply because George was the one they got hold of—the other fellow was out of town—he was the one who was sent. And all this time I wasn't allowed to say where he was, or what he was doing, or why he had suddenly disappeared. “He's on consultation in Washington,” left people sort of wondering what was going on. I did tell my two older children, I didn't tell the two younger ones. And then suddenly we had to pack and follow and go back home. That too, was a rather difficult time. We had expected to be there three years, and the longer you stay in the business, the harder it is to move quite so often. We hadn't been anywhere for longer than two years since we started and we were looking forward to a third year because it often takes that long to get to know people, and to get them to trust you, in some posts more than others. Swaziland was certainly one of those. We were just getting to feel productive, and to get a feel for the place, and zap, off we went.

And, of course, the Department was saying, “Oh, we understand this is a very difficult assignment, Mrs. Lane. Anything you need, just let us know.” Until, of course, you call

them with a particular request and then they don't want to hear from you. Because my big thing about going was trying to keep the kids in one school. One was already at Northfield, and my son had been accepted, and I thought if I could get my youngest—who was just ready for ninth grade, at least all in one school, then at least I'd have the kids settled and I would be free to go join him if it were possible at some point. And I didn't have a place here...

Q: Oh, you mean you were brought back?

LANE: I was brought back to the U.S., yes. I had to come back to the U.S. and I was told by people in the State Department that what I should do was rent a house, and put the kids in public school, and go play it that way. And I just refused. I said, “I'm not going to move these kids again. We've moved too much.” And I was just going to do anything I could to keep them together and in one school, and also so that I could go and be with George. Everyone, I guess, thought that was crazy given what was going on in Beirut, and there was no way I was going to meet him there but things go up and down with Beirut. I'd spent a lot of time there, and I just thought there was a chance that this could happen. I really wanted more than anything, wanted the kids to stay put, and not be moved again.

Q: And get them in a good boarding school.

LANE: And where I knew they could finish, one way or another, without jerking them out again. The feeling I got from people I kept trying to talk to in Washington, was that I just wanted them in private school, and not in public school. That's why we were so anxious to keep them in Northfield.

Q: And they wouldn't give you...

LANE: Well, it was just keeping them in one place really. And because two of them were already there, to break off that...I mean they'd already been paying their educational allowance to carry them there.

And this is when the Department wouldn't come through with the educational allowance to keep them there.

Q: They were going to stop that?

LANE: Oh, yes. Because I was now back in the States. I finally borrowed money to do that. I just went into debt to keep them in school. The Department did finally pay us back after I went to Beirut. I went down and talked to all sorts of people who suddenly sort of disappeared when I appeared on the scene, and that's probably difficult. I mean, setting precedents is something everybody is scared of doing in a bureaucracy. I do think there are cases when you just have to do some of these things. I had a friend working in the mental health division in the State Department, saying that we regularly spent something like $50,000 a year on medevacs, and I was asking for $12,000 to keep three kids in school. You know, it saves you money in the long run. I just don't know why we can't somehow bend a little bit to take care of our people.

I finally went up to see Carol Laise. She was Director General at that time, and she was very supportive. In fact, almost too supportive and she began saying that they should do what you needed, and so forth, and that angered some of the people who had been telling me no. So you get into that kind of messy situation.

Q: Where did you live then when they were at school?

LANE: I came here, right here in this house. Actually, I didn't stay here, my father-in-law was still here, but a friend down the hill had a house they weren't using so they had given that to me, which is the only reason I could afford to do that. They didn't charge me rent, I was totally alone, and it was kind of nice. And again, if I'd known I was going to be there six months, I would have gone to school or taken a course, or done something. But I kept thinking, “Next month I'll go back. It will be finished.” I had to fight, bleed and die, and they finally did let me go back when things opened up a little bit. George was Charg# for a

while, and then when Ambassador Parker was assigned to go back, he said, “I'll go if my wife can go.” And they said, “Of course, she can go. Mrs. Lane is there.” It was just all very natural. I'd been fighting for six months to get back there. But it is hard when you evacuate a post and then turn around and say, “Okay, you can go back.” I understand. There are all kinds of difficult problems but I just think we've got to be a little bit more flexible in dealing with individual cases once in a while. We're not a big group, the Foreign Service, and I think one reason it's hard to get people to go into this business is that there hasn't been the support. We haven't been good advocates for our problems with Congress. I mean I think you can make good cases for a lot of these situations and they would understand what the situations are. You're not asking for that much, really.

Q: Sometimes I used to wish they'd just give me a block amount of money and I would get from here to there, and use it in whatever way.

LANE: But the travel thing is the one that...I mean they trust you with State secrets but not with your travel plans. I mean it's insulting when you think of it that way. I can remember when the kids were all little, and we were flying back from Beirut to the States on home leave, and every other airline had a direct flight from Beirut to London and then we'd go from London to the States which was fine. We had to go PanAm, which went Beirut-Istanbul-Belgrade—I don't know, then Brussels and then London. You know, up for an hour and then down for an hour and trying to feed kids on this. I know our youngest—you'd just get a bottle down and she'd throw up on the next trip going down again. And the stewardesses don't want to go near you. All they want to do is serve drinks to the businessmen on the flight. And then they'd get the bottle too hot, and you couldn't feed this child!

Q: You laugh now.

LANE: You laugh now but it was just awful. And again, why can't you say for a trip that is longer, or so many miles, or whatever, when you have so many small children you can go

on another airline, you can take a direct flight. I don't know why they put you through such hoops. And, of course, we all did it. I was angry but it never occurred to me...

Q: They were weeding out the weak people obviously, and you stuck! Let's see, where are we? You're back in Lebanon and the children are finishing school. Did they all graduate from Northfield?

LANE: Yes, three of them did, and one of them went on to Tufts.

Beirut ended up being a very nice period. That was the last really nice time in Beirut—'77 through '78. I had almost two years there—my husband had two years—I was there just about a year and a half. And our youngest came back and went to school there which was wonderful for her because it was the first time she'd ever been to a school where none of her siblings had been. So that was nice for her, and it was just a nice period. It was fun to be back in Beirut, but then just as we thought we were going to relax and enjoy it again...and in that period of time too, I moved three times in Beirut. From the time I left Swaziland through that two year period in Beirut until we got to our next post in Yemen, I moved ten times. I was beginning to get sort of funny, and I finally sat down and figured out how many times I'd moved. I mean, some of them were a month's stay here, but that's still a move.

Q: Yes, and even just across the street is a move.

LANE: When I first got there we were actually living in the Embassy, which is where the whole group had stayed. They had lived, worked and slept in the Embassy for about six months when George first went over there after Meloy was killed. So I moved into that little apartment, and then we moved into another apartment, and then we moved again after that just in Beirut. And then we were sent off to Yemen where George was appointed Ambassador. At that point I really would have liked to have gone to something like the Bowie Seminar at Harvard.

I think they thought they were rewarding us for good service, and a job well done in Beirut, and all that stuff, so they'd make George Ambassador. It's nice, and it's nice to have the title but at that point I really didn't want another challenging post.

Q: And was it very challenging?

LANE: Yes, yes, it is. Being Ambassador in a young third world country like that is always a challenge because living is not easy there. But again, Yemen is a wonderful country, it was a fascinating place, and we had a nice tennis court right on the compound. That was nice and we did stay there three years, the first time ever, which was nice.

Q: But lots of Ambassadorial type dinner parties, and that sort of thing?

LANE: Some. Yes, a certain amount of that. The residence there is a magnificent residence. It's probably the most unique in the Foreign Service, and maybe Oman comes a close second. But this is an old Yemeni house, a multistoried building with stained glass windows, and decorated—Plaster of Paris on the outside—so they look like gingerbread houses from the outside. They are just stunning. Our house was in the middle of the compound, two minutes from the Embassy chancellery itself which is all in this little compound with mud brick walls around it that anybody could knock down anytime they wanted to. But we lived on the top three floors of the house, and two secretaries and a communicator lived on the lower part of the house. The whole compound was the one garden for the entire American community, so there was very little privacy in the sense that our house was our own—the top three floors—but not the whole place. It's just an amazing house and, of course, no elevator. We had to go up thirty-five steps just to get to the beginning of our house and 65 steps to the dining room.

Q: That would keep you in good shape.

LANE: I changed it around so that we opened up the middle part, put two rooms together with a big archway in the middle so that we had room to seat at least twenty people which

we didn't have before. Previously everything had been on the top floor. The Yemeni build their houses several stories and they keep the top floor as their major living room so that you have a nice view, and the air is nice and clean. So the room up there was nice but it was very small. It could seat maybe eight at the most up there. So we switched things around and by making the major living room and also our major guest rooms on the first level that we had which was thirty-five steps up, and there were about sixty all the way to the top. When we had people over we usually had them to the living room first and gave them a few drinks, and they could stagger up the rest of the way to the dining room which was on the top floor.

Q: Where was the kitchen? Way down at the bottom?

LANE: The kitchen was on the top floor. And you really had to think when you went down to make sure you had everything you wanted with you because it wasn't fun to go all the way up too often. And, of course, this is at about 7,000 feet too, so the altitude affects people and those who were in on a quick trip don't have time to adjust to the altitude. And it really does affect you. Climbing up the stairs is not easy if you're a little overweight, or tend to drink a little too much. But it's a lovely spot and I understand we've left the Embassy now and moved to a more modern building, which I think is really a shame. Obviously it's hard because it's a crumbling building, and you have to keep maintaining it, but still it's just so unusual.

Q: It's like a whole apartment building.

LANE: Well, it's rather like a medieval keep because there is a huge staircase that goes up through the whole house, and each set of floors are sort of up a few stairs and off in one direction. So you had to go up stairs, or down stairs, even within the area that we lived in. To go into our bedroom, for example, you went down a few stairs, and then into a little living room area, and then up a few more stairs to the bedroom. It's a wonderful place. You almost felt like you were playing house.

Q: Did your children join you there at Christmases?

LANE: They came for holidays. They were all in college at that point, and our son took a year off and came out and spent a year there, trying to find a job and learn Arabic. It wasn't too successful. It's hard to find a good Arabic teacher. It's funny that in many of these countries the good teachers are hard to come by because they're already working either at the university, if there is one, or in the civil service. So in order to find a really good teacher...it's just very difficult. He had one or two but as soon as he'd get settled the guy would get another job, or leave, or whatever. Although he did make some progress it wasn't as satisfactory as it might have been. They all enjoyed coming out, and one of our daughters came out for the summer and worked with the Save the Children clinic just outside Sanaa, the capitol, and that was also very good experience. Our oldest daughter actually came back...she'd finished the university in England, she came and worked for City Bank which had a branch in Sanaa then. She worked there the whole time she was there and made very good money. You know they pay extremely well.

Q: And lived with you?

LANE: Yes. So that was kind of nice.

Q: You were there three years?

LANE: We were there three years, which was a good period. Again, our youngest was in school at Washington University and she was having a hard time at one point getting readjusted into university life, and had a serious depression. And, again, that's hard because you're so far away. You get a letter that was three weeks old and know you weren't there.

Q: Could you phone?

LANE: We could phone, with difficulty, but once in a while you'd get through and then, of course, she'd be in tears on the other end. You know, when you don't have a lot of money, do you pick up and go back? Do you fly her out? What happened was, she came out for the Christmas holidays and stayed and then I went back with her and found someone she could talk to, and got things straightened out. Then again, it's just one of those tough parts of being in the Foreign Service, and maybe especially when they're in college.

Q: When they're grown it's even harder.

LANE: It is harder because they have more serious problems, and you need to be there, and they need to be able to reach you. Our last post was in Germany and we could phone so easily. It wasn't these sort of long distance, fading in and out phone calls that you couldn't hear. She survived and she has done very well now, but that was a difficult stage there. But it was a good post. We had a good group of people to work with and we really thoroughly enjoyed it.

Q: Do you have any feelings about this directive that came out about the wives being no longer recognized on their husband's efficiency reports?

LANE: I don't think I cared one way or the other about that. I don't think it ever affected me. I had the feeling it never really...even when we were supposed to be included, I don't think they ever really said very much about what was going on. I do feel there are times when I did a lot of so-called admin, type work. I mean in Benghazi where we sort of maintain a residence for the Ambassador there, and had to be ready to support them anytime they came. That was a little tricky and I think maybe we should have been given an allowance to do that. It's one thing to do the entertaining but to support your own staff I think is a whole other ball game. There is no reason why we should have been out of pocket to do that. And the same thing in Swaziland where I really maintained the residence.

Q: That was a job really.

LANE: That was a job, and I set it up as a job for whoever followed me, but because it was new, and they just got the residence while we were there, we were establishing the whole thing. And they had just started this business of PIT positions, so that was a possibility, and you had to find somebody who could do it. And it would have been awkward if I, as the wife of the Charg#, had been paid to do it. I just did the job. And I suppose that why I feel that each time I've done something like this, without being compensated, my feeling was that I was supporting my husband, and doing a job. Actually what I liked about the Foreign Service was that I was always a part of what was going on. There again it's largely thanks to my husband who did include me. He told me things he probably should not have told me, but given where we were living, and the kind of posts that we've had, I think I would have gone stark raving mad to be treated simply as his housekeeper, and not included in the substantive part of what he was doing. And I think that's the only reason we were able to keep sane and keep going. I think a lot of husbands don't do that, and they have these weird ideas about what's important. It's crazy to go to cocktail parties and leave your children, when it often doesn't matter at all whether you show up or not at that party.

Q: I know. That was very clear to you.

LANE: It's just that I'm very fortunate that I happened to be married to a guy who has his priorities straight.

Q: I know. My husband says the same thing.

LANE: But I know many of our friends had real problems with that.

Q: And then I think they also themselves felt it was very important that things be done just right. These little things don't matter that much in the big picture.

LANE: They don't matter at all. That's, I guess, part of what I miss now in current life is that I'm not a part of what he's doing. I'm gradually finding my own ways of doing things. It's one of the pluses, of what I think of as the Foreign Service is having been kind of

substantively involved. Sure there were a lot of frustrations along the way but there are in any business. You don't escape the problems. As I say, my big objection to all of this, is that we haven't recognized our unique problems, our special problems, and we haven't been willing to deal with them in a way that I think we could have a long time ago. I'm not sure we still are. We're getting to be very good about paying for divorced spouses, and things like that, and getting work for spouses who want to work. But that basic support for those who want to do the Foreign Service job, I don't think is there. Maybe I'm wrong. It's hard.

Q: I know what you mean.

LANE: I think maybe it's in the “too hard box” as our military friends would say.

Q: And if you talk to diplomats from other countries, some of them have worked it out more easily.

LANE: They have. They get more support. I mean the British who get nannies paid for.

Q: And travel for their pets.

LANE: Yes. There are a lot of things that are just assumed. This whole business of how you travel. I know when you're an Ambassador you get to go first class when you arrive at a country, and when you leave at the end of your tour, not for home leave or anything in between. So, of course, anytime an Ambassador travels in these little countries usually the protocol officer wants to know about it. They take you out to the airport, and take you up to the first class part of the plane, and see you on and all that sort of thing. And we'd have to walk towards the back of the plane! Nobody would understand this kind of thing, and in fact they're embarrassed by it. It just isn't right from their way of looking at it. And these are just stupid little things. I mean an Ambassador should be able to travel, if not first class, business class. Something a little bit in the middle. This is the kind of stupid picky thing that we're so silly about.

Q: And it is an embarrassment in the other country as you said.

LANE: It really is, that this big country can't afford to treat its Ambassador the way he should be treated. Not that you care, but it's just silly.

Q: I just wanted you to talk a little about your music, because I think that's another thing that kept you very happy.

LANE: That's very true, it has. I was always able to find at least one other person to do music with, either to play duets, or singing duets. And we did have little musical groups. We had a wonderful group in Jeddah. We put on the Brahms Liebeslieder Waltzes. In fact, Dick and Ann Murphy were with us then. Dick Murphy is now retired, but he was recently the Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs, and always on TV and so forth. A very competent good guy, also Ambassador to the Philippines recently, and several countries. They were a part of that little group. There were about six of us and we put on some very good music. We did very well. And the same thing in Benghazi. We put on Trial by Jury, and I played the piano for that. In Yemen we put on a musical evening. And in an odd way you miss that sort of thing when you come back here. There's a special feeling. Those old fashioned musical evenings, sort of do-it-yourself culture. There's no substitute for it. It brings out things you don't know you have. In Yemen we had a little theater group and we put on two or three plays. People who had never walked across a stage in their lives did a terrific job, and discovered they really liked it. I find the posts where we've been, bring out either the best, or the worst in people. There's no middle ground. Those who rise to the challenge and dig deep into their inner resources, come out fine. But many just can't cope and they crumble and leave.

You don't find many who just barely cope. That's my experience so far. And we have had mostly “challenging posts.” After Yemen we came back and did the Diplomat in Residence for a year in Portland, Oregon, because we'd never lived in the States very much.

Q: Why Oregon?

LANE: Because at that time they had certain universities that were chosen for this program and Portland State was one of those that was chosen. I guess two or three others had already been taken, and we decided we wanted to go to the west coast. Someone we had known in Yemen was teaching on the staff there so we knew we had an “in” there. That was a fun time but it was too short.

Q: For a year?

LANE: An academic year, not even a year, and that too, when you move as much as we do, to do that by choice for ten months is kind of insane. Again, as I mentioned before, that period when I moved ten times, we got to Yemen and they had been talking about moving the Ambassador's residence into another house that somebody wanted to move to, and I said, “I'm sorry. You've got the wrong lady. I'm not moving anywhere. You can talk to our successor, but not us.” So we stayed. You just get to a point where the very thought of another move is just unbearable.

Q: Did they have a house for you out in Oregon?

LANE: No, we had to find our own. Actually this friend of ours found it for us. She was just wonderful. And we had to pay our rent too, and we happened to hit it when it was high in that period, and that was hard. It was something like $500. a month which doesn't seem like a whole lot, but when you don't have a lot of money, it is a lot. And there wasn't any allowance for that. So it's difficult financially, and it's also difficult because by the time you and the university figure out how to work together, the time is up. Most of them were a little stunned at having a “Diplomat in Residence,” and they don't quite know...they expect to see a guy in striped pants wondering around with a champagne glass in his hand, or something, and talking about nothing in particular. And the idea that you're very ordinary people...

Q: Did he have regular classes?

LANE: Yes, he gave a course in Middle East history.

Q: And then was available for speeches.

LANE: Exactly, and talking to students. He talked to Rotary Clubs and all that kind of thing. So for us it was an interesting time in that we got to see a part of the country we never had, and to live in a whole different kind of American community. I think it's a very good program, but I do think it ought to be at least a full year, say a year and a summer. Go and get set up in the summer, and then do the full academic year. Or make it two years which many of them are now. It's much more flexible today. You can sort of set up your own arrangement and work it out. Because we have so many people in the senior level there's no place to go, and if you can find a good slot for yourself the Department is very happy to help you work it out.

Q: And then after that you went to...

LANE: We went to Stuttgart where George was the Political Adviser. POLAD is the acronym that was used for that—Political Adviser to the Deputy Commander in Chief.

Q: Of the U.S. Forces?

LANE: The U.S. Forces, right. The Commander was General Rogers in Brussels, and then his Deputy lives in Stuttgart which is the headquarters for all the American troops in Europe. That was also a very interesting tour. We were there three years. For me it was fun. We didn't have kids and as I said, I like languages and I had had a little German before. We lived in Germany for a year when we were first married. I hadn't been back since then. I took German in college so I was able to pull it back up fairly easily, and really had a good time getting into the local community. We had many good German friends that we still see.

Q: Just a year?

LANE: Three years.

Q: Oh, lovely.

LANE: It was very nice. We lived on the base, the military base. And that in itself is an experience too, and I think George needed all his diplomatic skills to get along with his military colleagues. Because there is a built in suspicion between the State Department and the Pentagon. We tend to think of each other as stereotypes. To break some of those down was kind of fun. You would look at that as your challenge, and I think it was also a good transitional tour for George from being in charge of a post, to where nobody cared what he did. The job was very much what he made of it. But it was substantive enough that he really did enjoy it. At that time there was a lot going on in Lebanon so his earlier experience really was helpful. Except that nobody really listens to you, but you put in your two cents worth anyway.

Q: Did you know then that that would be your last assignment?

LANE: We had more or less decided—we'd been talking about leaving. Well, I suppose we'd been talking for years I think as we all do. We keep thinking, “Well, we'll go to this next post, and we'll go the this next post...” and it goes on and on. But this we decided probably would be. I think I was pushing a little harder than George who would have liked maybe to have one more post, one more chance at being Ambassador, because you do a better job, I think, having done it once. But we couldn't think of too many places where we really wanted to go, where he would likely be sent. And several things came together. Our family house was suddenly available—his father had died. It just seemed suddenly a good time to quit and find another job. We didn't really think in terms of retirement, but rather another career for the rest of our lives. So I think we just made the decision about half way through that tour, that this would be our last. And I think it was basically a good one, and

has worked out very well. We've had a fascinating life, a pretty standard Foreign Service life.

When we were in Washington, I remember at one point—again, doing a musical group for the wives on the seventh floor with some other musical wives—and we got together several times to practice and rehearse, and listening to all those other wives talk—they had all been either only in Europe, or only in Latin America. It just happened to be that way. I felt as if I had been in an entirely different Foreign Service. Their experiences had absolutely nothing to do with mine.

Q: Oh, I think so, yes.

LANE: We just weren't really talking the same language.

Q: I would think they'd be quite different.

LANE: They were, particularly those who had never lived anywhere but Europe. I think that's very, very...and you begin to think of the whole world as being like Europe. It just isn't. That's a very, very small part of the world, and you don't realize that when you're in Europe. You think that the whole world revolves around Europe. It's a very different life. So that was kind of interesting. I was shocked to discover how different it was even just with...and I say that because even now it's easier to talk to other Foreign Service people, but still there is a little difference depending on your experiences.

Q: If you haven't been in the Middle East.

LANE: If you haven't had the Middle East experience, or some difficult so-called “challenging post.”

Q: Well, Betsy, is there any specific issue you want to raise besides what you have? I think you've told wonderful...

LANE: I think the Foreign Service is changing, and I think it has to change, and I hope it can begin to address some of the problems of living in the Foreign Service. Again, there aren't any easy answers because nobody has figured out who's going to do that job that those of us in my generation did, because it still needs to be done. Other businesses do it, and the people in the academic world do a certain amount of...maybe a little less though I mean, you can always cater or hire people out to do things in a way that you can't when you're in a remote post, and it's all on you. There are some serious problems and I really don't have any brilliant solutions to them.

Q: Muddle along the best we can.

LANE: ...muddle along, and the answer is to be flexible, I think, and not have rules that will apply to everyone, because they don't. We have different services and different needs in the different parts of the world, and the world is changing today. The third world is changing and all kinds of things are, and we've got to be able to adjust to that. But we're usually very slow about that.

Q: Thank you very much.

***

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Spouse:George Mirick Lane

Spouse Entered Service:9/57Left Service: 12/85You Entered Service:Same

Status: Spouse of Retiree

Posts: fall 1957Washington, DC, Foreign Service Institute 1958-60Department of State 1960-62Beirut, Lebanon, Foreign Service Institute 1962-64Jeddah, Saudi Arabia 1964-66Aleppo, Syria 1966-68Rabat, Morocco 1968-70Benghazi, Libya

1970-74Washington, DC 1974-76Mbabane, Swaziland 1976-78Beirut, Lebanon 1978-81Sanaa, Yemen 1981-82Portland State, Oregon, Diplomat in Residence 1982-85POLAD, Stuttgart, Germany

Spouse's Position:

Econ/Political Officer

Charg#, Benghazi and Mbabane

Ambassador to Yemen

Place/Date of birth: November 28, 1932

Maiden Name: Elizabeth DecherdParents:

Mr, and Mrs. Douglas Decherd, Missionaries (Syria and Lebanon)

Schools (Prep, University): ACS Beirut, Northfield School, Barnard College, BA

Date/Place of Marriage: July 14, 1955, Beirut

Children:3 daughters, 1 son

Volunteer and Paid Positions held: A. At Post: Volunteer - musical activities, taught piano managed Ambassador's residence in Mbabane helped set up FLO in Yemen taught English as a Second Language

B. In Washington, DC: Tour guide for IVIS (translator)

End of interview